

Junior Wells *Hoodoo Man Blues* Delmark Records
by Peter Stone Brown
10 Stars

Easily one of the greatest Chicago Blues albums by anyone and in fact this was the very first album of Chicago Blues recorded as an album. All of the available albums on Chess by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter and other artists were not recorded as albums but were collections of singles. *Hoodoo Man Blues* would change all that.

This was Junior Wells' debut though as it turned out he had recorded way earlier in the '50s and those recordings would eventually be issued by various labels all over the world. However this album put both Wells and guitarist Buddy Guy (originally listed on the album as "Friendly Chap" on the map, and while they would record several more albums together, nothing touched this in terms of excitement and funkiness, though Wells next two albums recorded for Vanguard, one live and one studio came close.

Delmark founder Bob Koester gave Wells the freedom to pick the musicians as well as the songs he wanted to do. The result was what you would hear if you saw Wells in a Chicago bar, working with a small band, just guitar, bass and drums. Bassist Jack Myers and drummer Bill Warren were more than up to the task, laying back on the slow blues like "In The Wee Hours" and being more out front on the upbeat numbers in wild syncopation.

Wells was always a tough hard singer and easily one of the top Chicago harp players, he played harmonica as if it was a horn, and Buddy Guy is always right there to answer him. And some things ended up being happy accidents. Guy's amp broke on the session and he played some songs through a Leslie organ speaker resulting in the guitar sound on the title track, which almost sounds like a keyboard.

But from the opening blast of "Snatch It Back And Hold It" to the creeping beat of "Early In The Morning" to what would become Wells' trademark song and by extension trademark riff, "You Don't Love Me" to the cover of Kenny Burrell's "Chitlin Con Carne," one would be hard pressed to find music that's funkier.